

NSC BRIEFING

8 January 1954

BLOODSHED MAY BE INEVITABLE
AT PANMUNJOM

I. Disorders involving bloodshed at Panmunjom on or about 23 January are beginning to look inevitable, regardless of whether India releases the prisoners.

II. The 22,000 anti-Communist prisoners are well-organized for any eventuality.

25X1X7

A. [REDACTED] each compound is thoroughly organized down to four and five-man cells.

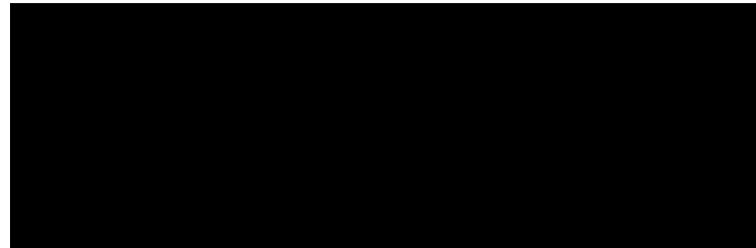
B. They are receiving instructions by radio code from South Korea's General Won *Gong Duk* who engineered the prisoner release last June.

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C. They are armed with home-made weapons, have their own security patrols operating around the clock which are

25X1X7^{ruthless.}



III. If prisoners are not released on schedule, they are almost certain to riot and attempt a mass break-out, If Indians attempt to hold them back, slaughter of hundreds appears likely.

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IV. If prisoners are not released on schedule, Rhee would feel impelled to take some action to effect their release.

- A. He is emotional over detention of Korean nationals by a foreign power.
- B. His conviction that India is pro-Communist was newly reinforced by the unfavorable NNRC interim POW report and the Indian "headcount."
- C. He has already publicly threatened to use force against the Indians if the POW's are not automatically released on 23 January.

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V. Any attempt by Rhee, probably effected by police troops under Gen. Won, would, by the truce terms, have to be counteracted by UNC action.

A. While Rhee would be reluctant to risk a UN-South Korean clash, he might gamble that the US would choose not to uphold the truce rather than to shoot down South Koreans.

B. The fact that he would be violating the truce would not deter Rhee since his agreement not to obstruct the truce expires a few days after 23 January.

VI. The continued detention of POW's might become, for Rhee, justification for initiating unilateral military action against the Communists.

A. His recent statements, however, have emphasized the "right" rather than the "intention" to attack northward.

B. There are no indications that he is preparing to renew the war.

VII. If the prisoners are not released, the Communists would likely respond with heavy propaganda exploitation of what they would term acceptance of their position, meanwhile standing by to exploit any possible incidents between South Korean, and Indian or US forces.

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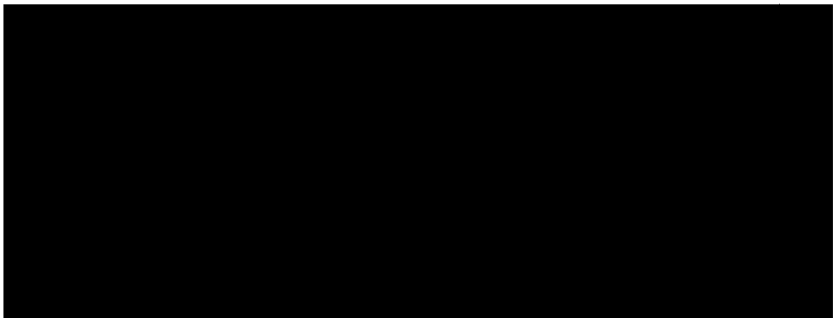
VIII. Even if the prisoners are released, as now seems probable, there is a likelihood of bloodshed.

- A. Possibly anti-Communist leaders in the southern camp will dictate death on the night of 22 January for any prisoners who have wavered in their determination not to go home or who may be suspected agents.
- B. These leaders might attempt a massacre of the 350 pro-Communist (including 21 Americans) in the northern camp.
- C. There might be a mass breakout prior to 22 January by prisoners who fear retaliation from the anti-Communist leaders.

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D. Although more remote, Rhee's emotionalism over India might cause him to order a breakout

25X6D in advance of 22 January.



IX. If the prisoners are released on schedule, the Communists are certain to exploit the situation for propaganda stressing the illegality of the release and the "forcible retention" of the prisoners.

A. They are likely by subversion to create maximum disorder and bloodshed during the release, in much the same way they did on Kojima Island while under UNC

- B. Less probable is that they would commit one of the North Korean divisions opposite Panmunjom to forcibly seize the POW's. We don't think this issue is important enough to them to risk a renewal of the war, however.
- C. They would be more likely to exercise this capability if South Korean forces moved first, thus making Communist retaliation appear as an act of self-defense.

X. India has indicated that it agrees with the UN Command that its troops cannot legally hold the POW's beyond 22 January.

A. Nehru is under pressure from Peiping and pro-Communist advisers in the foreign ministry to delay the release.

B. India is planning to have the UN General Assembly reconvened on 9 February, and a decision to hold the prisoners until that date, while not expected, is possible.

XI In reply to Thimayya's letter of 2 January the Communists have just reaffirmed their position that discussion in the political conference must precede the prisoners' release.

- A. The UNC previously informed Thimayya that explanations are over and the POW's must be released at midnight on 22 January.
- B. Thimayya's next step will be to ask both commands to take back custody of the POW's. The Communists undoubtedly will reject this.
- C. Thimayya then plans to "liberate" the prisoners on 23 January without formally turning them over to the original detaining sides, provided New Delhi agrees.

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- XII. Tension among the Indians and the prisoners at Panmunjom being built up largely because of New Delhi's indecision and South Korean threats.
- XIII. The US is sufficiently involved so that if disorders break out we will suffer international embarrassment as well as defeat on the propaganda front.

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